



## Black Lives Matter strike hits 160 cities across US

Workers' action on Monday showed the anger at racism and poor conditions, says Sophie Squire

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# Socialist Worker

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UNEMPLOYMENT



'PAY RISE' CON



VIRUS CHAOS

# THE TORIES' INSULT TO WORKERS

## NOW IT'S TIME FOR A REAL FIGHTBACK

>>>Page 5

BORIS JOHNSON



### COVID-19

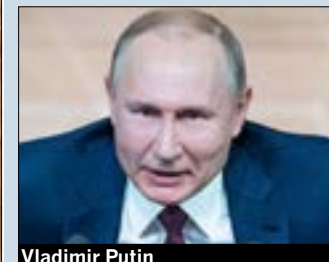
## The truth behind the Tories' vile coronavirus lies

THE TORIES say it's right to go back to work in August. They say it will be safe for children to go back to school. And they say their test and trace system is effective and secure.

As they push to reopen all workplaces, Socialist Worker exposes the myths that tell us it's safe to return.

>>Pages 4&5

### ELECTIONS



Vladimir Putin

## Russia, Britain and the money connection

THE TORIES have ties to Russian oligarchs. They have worked closely with Russian money to open up bits of London as tax havens.

So politics has been open to the machinations of the Russian government.

But that doesn't mean that such interference swung the Brexit vote.

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### PRIVATISATION

## The private firms making a killing from Covid-19

PRIVATE FIRMS are cashing in on the coronavirus crisis.

The Tories have used the need to stock up on personal protective equipment and other supplies to hand over billions of pounds.

Socialist Worker investigates.

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PICTURE: PA



## THE THINGS THEY SAY

### 'He will be great'

US president Donald Trump pays tribute to Boris Johnson

### 'Don't mess with Boris'

The Daily Express newspaper

### 'You'll be dead to me'

What top Tory advisor Dominic Cummings said would happen if anyone leaked government information—according to a leak

### 'He didn't chair any meetings. He liked his country breaks. He didn't work weekends'

A Downing Street senior advisor on Boris Johnson's handling of the coronavirus crisis

### 'The health of Boris Johnson is the health of the body politic and, by extension, the health of the nation'

Columnist Allison Pearson in the Daily Telegraph

### 'Wonderful news. Many congratulations to Boris Johnson and Carrie Symonds'

Labour leader Keir Starmer gushes his congrats to Johnson after he becomes a father for the [insert figure] time



# A year of lies, cuts, corruption, racism and 'getting it done'

THERE WERE those who thought a year of Boris Johnson as prime minister would spell disaster.

Apart from the outbreak of a plague, soaring unemployment and migrants dying in trucks and in the sea, how wrong they were.

There has been the casual racism, the clampdowns on civil liberties, the throwing at money at business mates at every opportunity.

And there was the bumbling act designed to distract us as the planet burns.

So it could have been worse.

Johnson ran his general election campaign last year with arrogance, lies—and weakness.

He made a slew of spending promises from the NHS to welfare that quickly



BORIS JOHNSON

turned out to be rehashed announcements. He lied over benefit cuts, and spending on the poor.

The centrepiece was £13 billion of funding to build 40 new hospitals—a policy so good the Tories announced it

three times. It turned out to be £2.7 billion to refurbish six hospitals, eventually.

But Johnson has kept some promises. He pledged to “come down hard on crime” and increase stop and search.

And the government is still pushing ahead with one wheeze it promised—the onshore tax havens, or “freeports”.

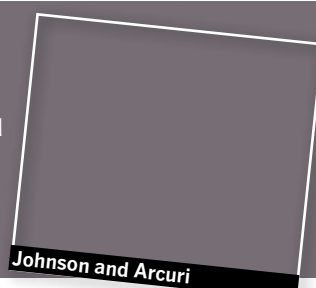
When the then new international trade secretary Liz Truss arrived at her department, she told staff how fabulous it was to be “in such a hot room because, let me tell you, trade is hot”.

One constant in the first year of Johnson's government has been racism. Johnson threatened last summer to deport anyone who made it across the English Channel.

“If you come illegally, you are an illegal migrant and the law will treat you as such,” he warned. “We will send you back.”

Home secretary Priti Patel was dishing out the same spiel this month.

JOHNSON'S FRIENDSHIP with a US entrepreneur who was granted £126,000 in public money during his time as London mayor should have been a damaging scandal. Jennifer Arcuri insisted that grants her companies received were justified and “purely in respect of my role as a legitimate businesswoman”. Her firms got public cash and went on trade missions backed by Johnson.



Johnson and Arcuri

- BORIS Johnson celebrated 'getting Brexit done' with a £350 bottle of 1994 vintage Chateau Margaux.
- JOHNSON promised grants of up to £5,000 for flood victims last year. But it turned out the rules on getting the grants were so strict that thousands of victims couldn't get them.
- BOSS David Ross didn't pay for Johnson's £15,000 New Year jaunt to the Caribbean, so who did?

## Resistance to Johnson began on day one

BORIS Johnson probably thought it would take more than a day for thousands of people to oppose his leadership victory on 24 July 2019.

But the “Fuck Boris” demonstration in central London, pulling in 5,000 people, sparked off a year of resistance to his turgid premiership.

The protest not only opposed Johnson but also his transatlantic ally Donald Trump, wider attacks on working class people and Brexit.

On 20 September an estimated 250,000 people across Britain joined a one-day strike to demand urgent action on the climate catastrophe.

A strong anti-Tory current ran throughout many of the



Protesters welcomed Johnson to office

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

demonstrations. Chants of, “Where the fuck is the government?” and, “Less Boris, more forests,” could be heard.

And around 2,000 people joined an angry demonstration against the Tory victory in London after the general election on 12 December.

Thousands more marched through the streets of Glasgow. Protesters defied police

attempts to kettle them—and raised demands about the NHS, and Johnson's track record of racism and sexism.

There has also been organised workers' resistance in the last year.

UCU union members held protracted strikes demanding better pay, pensions and conditions across 74 universities.

And as Johnson approaches his one-year

anniversary as prime minister, Tower Hamlets strikers are battling to save their jobs.

Perhaps the most impressive challenge to Johnson has come from the Black Lives Matter movement.

This furiously erupted despite near-total lockdown conditions in Britain and took Johnson and his government to task.

In typical fashion, Johnson claimed the protests had been “hijacked by extremists intent on violence”.

As much as Johnson can be relied on to be a racist, homophobe and sexist, people can be relied on to resist him.

We need to do much more of it.

## CORONAVIRUS CHAOS

### January

The World Health Organisation (WHO) declares that coronavirus is a “public health emergency of international concern”.

The government decides not to work with other countries to buy protective equipment—despite being warned to stockpile it.

### February

The prime minister's chief advisor, Dominic Cummings, outlined the government's strategy summarised by someone present as, “herd immunity, protect the economy, and if that means some pensioners die, too bad”.

### March

**4 March** Boris Johnson says that the country is “very, very well prepared”.

Johnson boasts that he had shaken the hands of everyone at a hospital where patients infected with coronavirus were being treated

**5 March** Johnson floats the idea of “herd immunity” on ITV's This Morning, saying that “one of the theories is, that perhaps you could take it on the chin, take it all in one go and allow the disease, as it were, to move through the population”.

**23 March** Johnson announces a strict national lockdown a week after allowing the Cheltenham Festival to take place, with more than 60,000 people attending each day.

### April

Johnson says, “I want to say a special word about testing, this is how we will defeat it in the end.”

Only 2,000 people out of 500,000 frontline NHS England workers had been tested for coronavirus so far—or 0.4 percent.

Johnson is admitted to hospital with coronavirus. He remains in hospital until 12 April.

Dominic Cummings travels 250 miles with his son and wife during the lockdown even though he had virus symptoms at the time.

He then “tested his eyes” on a trip to Barnard Castle.

### July

Johnson said “you can find all sorts of inconsistencies” in the government advice on getting back to work.

**Over 45,000 people have officially died in Britain from coronavirus**

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# Tower Hamlets strike win would be a victory for all

by SARAH BATES

**STRIKING COUNCIL workers in east London concluded their second round of strikes last Friday with defiant picket lines and a vow to keep on fighting.**

Around 1,500 Unison union members at Tower Hamlets council are battling to save critical elements of their terms and conditions. They struck for three days last week.

On the picket line at Albert Jacob House last Wednesday, around 30 workers chanted, “Tower Hamlets, shame on you.”

Passing buses, lorries and bikes showed their solidarity every few seconds.

“It’s important to be here because you’ve still got staff members going to work and we’re trying to stop them,” Unison union rep Amina Patel told Socialist Worker.

She said the dispute was enjoying a high profile in the local area.

“Everyone around here knows what’s going on,” she said. “They know this is a council building and they’ve seen us picket here before.”

Strikers are fighting Tower Rewards—a series of attacks that includes cuts to redundancy pay, flexitime, travel allowances and night work supplements. Council management sacked and re-employed the 4,000-strong workforce on worse contracts on 6 July.

The behaviour of the Labour-run council is hard for workers to swallow, particularly after they put themselves in danger to deliver services during the pandemic.

Under Tower Reward guidelines, severance pay for low-paid workers has been reduced from 220 percent to 140 percent of their annual wage.

Housing officer Rita has worked at the council for 29 years and would lose out massively if the council makes her post redundant.

She told Socialist Worker that the



ON STRIKE in Tower Hamlets last week

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

latest attacks represented the rotten way the council is being run.

“The money is there—and it’s going to the few,” she said. “The managers are looking after themselves.”

Rita said a bloated layer of managers and consultants are being paid huge sums of money that could be used to fund essential services.

“They’re taking off us to give to the managers,” she said. Tracy was one

of many striking for the first time last Wednesday, despite working at the council for 13 years.

She “felt strongly” about the impact that Tower Rewards would have, asking, “Who’s going to work here if they can get paid more elsewhere?”

The council leadership publicly supported the Black Lives Matter movement. But Tracy said its attacks on jobs and services that black

women use undermine this. “They’re also in the process of cutting essential teaching services like the Community Language scheme, which is essentially all Bengali,” she added.

“And a few years ago they cut our home care service, where workers were Bengali or black.”

**Tower Hamlets strikers are asking for donations to their strike fund.** Account Number:41020890 Sort Code:60-83-01

## Labour councils cut jobs

**STRIKERS ARE** rightly furious that their jobs and services are being threatened by a Labour council.

They have received support from Labour figures such as Diane Abbott MP, baroness Shami Chakrabarti and Apsana Begum MP. Other local councillors have signed a letter demanding that the council pull back from imposing the new Tower Rewards contracts.

Striker Momtaz called on those at the top of Labour “to talk to mayor Biggs and get him to take it off the table”.

It’s welcome that

Labour figures are ready and willing to show their support.

But strikers need more than warm words to win—they need as much political pressure as possible forced upon Biggs and chief executive Tuckley.

Helen asked, “How can we expect Labour to lead? But it should at least support us—is Tower Hamlets council what they want Labour to be like?”

Strikers fear that the relentless push from the council to roll back on redundancy pay means it is planning mass job cuts in the future.

Shami Chakrabarti

## Workers fight the lies on Tower Rewards

**WORKERS ARE** determined to expose the lies at the heart of Tower Rewards. They have forced the council, led by mayor John Biggs and chief executive Will Tuckley, onto the back foot.

The council claims that some roles, such as social workers, stand to benefit from the proposals and will see a moderate increase to their pay.

But as social worker Helen said, “You don’t take from the lowest paid to give to social workers—and I think it’s a



myth we would gain anything anyway.

“Social workers are as angry as everybody else.”

Biggs and Tuckley are hoping to split workers apart in a dispute that has seen solid walkouts across all departments.

Strikers reported larger picket lines on the last day of action, with many walking out for the first time.

And reps also said more workers are leaving the GMB union, which is not striking, to join Unison and be part of the action.

Momtaz, who was part of a picket line outside Albert Jacob House, told Socialist Worker that fighting Tower Rewards was critical to beating back further attacks.

“There are going to be more restructuring, more layoffs, and more cuts coming in the name of Covid-19 austerity,” she said.

The task of delivering political solidarity and practical support for the workers waging an important battle in Tower Hamlets is an urgent one.

On the picket line, donations from Tower Hamlets College UCU union branch and Unison’s Islington branch were hugely cheering to strikers.

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# The truth behind the Tories' vile virus lies

As Boris Johnson pushes to reopen all workplaces, **Sarah Bates** exposes the myths that tell us it's safe to return

## MYTH—IT'S right to go back to work in August

Boris Johnson announced plans to push people back into the workplace from 1 August.

Johnson's move is purely in the interest of bosses collecting profit, not in the interests of protecting people's health.

Government figures on Monday showed the rolling average of daily deaths still stands at 69. This is far more than almost all other countries.

And because of the poor test and tracing system and a shortage of tests, the real number is likely to be much higher.

Researchers predict that the number of deaths each day will be 45-85 by the end of July.

That assessment is made under current lockdown conditions.

## Cramming

If people start going back to work, cramming into offices and using public transport, the figure will shoot up.

And government figures published last week showed that the R number could be 1 in nearly every region of England.

The figures showed the R number has increased slightly across Britain. Keeping it below 1 is critical to stem the outbreak.

But putting the responsibility on bosses to protect workers puts ordinary people's lives in danger.

Employers have forced workers to use workplaces that are unsafe throughout the pandemic, leading a number of high-profile spikes in infection. They can't be relied upon to guarantee that their workplaces are Covid-secure.

## MYTH—THE government's test and trace system is 'world beating'

Johnson promised the test and trace system—rolled out on 1 June—would be “world beating”.

Yet it's been beset by delays, data breaches and difficulties sharing information with local authorities.

Only around 50 percent of people who came into close contact with someone with Covid-19 had been contacted in a local outbreak (see page 17).

Dominic Harrison, the public health director at Blackburn with Darwen Council, said there would be “exponential growth” of infections unless the tracing system improved.

The way the scheme is supposed to work is that contract tracers begin with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19. They then get in touch with everyone that person has come into contact with.

If this process isn't done quickly, then the trail of transmission is lost.

“There's a 48-hour window which is critical to get the contacts of the first case contacted,” said Harrison.

“If we don't get them contacted, and if they don't then get tested and self-isolated, and then they have symptoms, we risk the spread progressing.”

Blackburn stands on the cusp of a local lockdown as cases surged across the region.

## Leaked

A leaked report said that around half of contacts couldn't be reached in Blackburn, Oldham, St Helens, Manchester and Rochdale.

But it's not just a local issue.

The government has admitted that the tracing scheme was struggling to get hold of everyone it needed to.

Its most recent statistics said that 17 percent of people who tested positive for Covid-19 couldn't be contacted.

Public Health England only started sharing postcode data where new infections were being registered with regional bodies on 29 June. This has led to delays in local services going to areas worst hit.

A good track and trace system has to be a core element in fighting the coronavirus crisis. The Tories' system is falling far short.



BORIS JOHNSON said the test and trace system would be 'world beating'. It was a lie

## MYTH—THE Tories are doing enough to keep children safe

The Tories' plan for getting all primary and secondary pupils back in the classroom in six weeks falls far short of what is needed to keep children and workers safe.

And they are trying to get parents back to work without providing any childcare support over the summer.

The programme for reopening schools is unworkable in the real world.

For instance, the Tories are suggesting that desks should be spaced far apart—but many classrooms simply don't have the capacity to socially distance.

And the government is saying that school start and leave times

should be staggered. Yet up to a million young people rely on public transport to get to school.

Many will struggle to fit new school times around bus or train timetables.

Their education also stands to suffer. Government guidance means paring back of the school curriculum.

Some students are likely to be encouraged to drop some subjects so they can focus on maths or English.

And the Department for Education is determined to push ahead with exams—despite hundreds of hours of learning time lost during the lockdown.

It's a plan that sets workers and students up to fail, and

leaves them at risk of contracting Covid-19.

Many parents are already struggling with no childcare options.

Yet bosses still expect them to carry out their jobs.

No residential summer camps have opened across Britain, and the remaining activity day camps are operating at a much-reduced capacity.

Parent Eleanor Clarke said, “We are panicking.

“We are worn out from working full time at home and part time home schooling.

“I am heartbroken that my nine year old son will have much of his holiday to fill by himself while his parents are expected to commit their time to work.

“I don't understand how holiday clubs can't open when pubs and restaurants can, and schools have taken some year groups back.”

The government should provide parents with proper childcare support, and the opportunity to take time off from work to look after their children.

And the Tories need to back off from the rushed return to schools plan it wants to roll out in September—it could spell disaster for infection rates.

Tories want school students to sit exams as normal

“We take the safety and wellbeing of our staff very seriously”.

The outbreak in Motherwell shows the perils of rushing back to work—and the carelessness of the bosses who are desperate to see workplaces reopen.

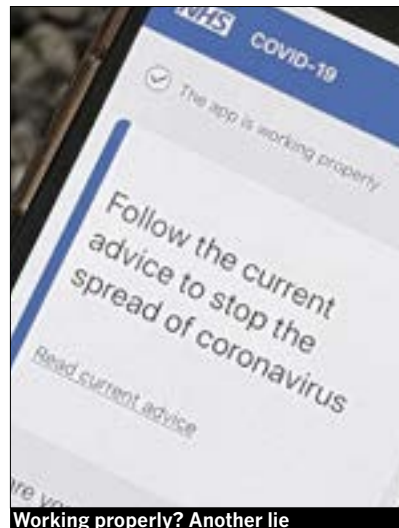
## MYTH—PERSONAL DATA will be protected under the government test and trace scheme

The Department of Health admitted this week that a test and trace scheme privacy assessment wasn't carried out.

After a challenge from the privacy organisation, Open Rights Group, the government said it hadn't carried out a data protection impact assessment, despite that being a legal requirement.

Since the programme was launched on 1 June, some 27,000 workers have contacted more than 155,000 people who may have contracted Covid-19.

But government failures and poor technology mean workers are compromising patient data in a



## MYTH—CORONAVIRUS HAS been eliminated in Scotland

The dangers of rushing back into unsafe workplaces was highlighted as cases began to rise in Scotland.

Last Saturday some 21 new Covid-19 cases were recorded, and a further 23 cases were noted on Sunday.

The rise in cases came as six workers at the test and trace call centre in North Lanarkshire tested positive for Covid-19.

The centre in Motherwell, run by tech firm Sitel, has now been closed. The firm said it “requested” that all staff at the centre undertake a coronavirus test in the next 24 hours.

A government spokesperson said, “A small increase in the number of cases is not unexpected as lockdown is lifted.”

Yet that will be a bitter pill for those who become very unwell with Covid-19, or for those who are medically vulnerable and risk death.

Monica Lennon, Central Scotland MSP, said, “Have received information from a constituent who works at the Sitel contact centre.

“Said there was a desk between call operatives but social distancing not maintained during breaks and in shared spaces.

“I asked if they felt the working environment was safe. They answered no.”

Yet a Sitel spokesperson claimed,

desperate attempt to reach people who may be very ill.

The Sunday Times newspaper reported on 12 July that workers were sharing confidential information on social media.

Tracers were using WhatsApp and Facebook groups in attempts to track people down as the official systems were insufficient.

Screenshots show names, NHS numbers and contact details of those who have tested positive for the virus.

Workers were joining hundreds-strong Facebook groups of contact tracers to share information with workers from other call centres.

Such flaws in the system risk patients' data being exploited by hackers, stalkers or scammers.

They also undermine the efficiency of the entire tracking scheme.

Open Rights Group executive director Jim Killock blasted the government for being “reckless” in how it was treating patients' data.

“A crucial element in the fight against the pandemic is mutual trust between the public and the government, which is undermined by their operating the programme without basic privacy safeguards,” he said.



## On other pages...

Racist legacy to blame for Blackburn Covid-19 spike >>>Page 17

## Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

# FIGHT FOR MORE THAN TORIES' PUNY PAY DEAL

**D**ON'T LISTEN to the noise coming from the Treasury, the Tories are doing their best to hammer workers into the ground.

They are encouraging bosses to get people back into workplaces from 1 August—a rushed move that will put ordinary people in danger.

The push for a return to making profits comes as infection rates rise in some areas as a result of easing lockdown.

Putting more control in the hands of bosses is a threat to workers' lives and public health.

Covid-19 spikes in workplaces—from garment factories, to call centres and meat processing plants—are evidence of this.

And, desperate to gain public favour, the government has announced an insufficient pay deal for a minority of public sector workers.

Doctors and dentists are set to receive an increase of 2.8 percent. Teachers in England are due to get a 3.2 percent in September.

Yet with the RPI measure of inflation standing at 1.1 percent, workers stand to gain only

pennies. Chancellor Rishi Sunak boasted, “These past months have underlined what we already knew—that our public sector workers make a vital contribution to our country and that we can rely on them when we need them.”

But workers have already faced years of pay freezes or below-inflation deals.

That means they've suffered a real-terms pay cut every year and are still below the level of 2010 in real terms.

It is deeply hypocritical that the government has spent four months half-heartedly celebrating key workers, yet throw just some of them scraps in a pay deal.

“**Tories pretend to celebrate key workers—then throw just some of them scraps**”

capitalist competition between the West and China.

So Tory and Labour politicians are horrified at images of Uygher people hooded and shackled in prison camps.

You'd think that Guantanamo Bay—where the West hoodis and shackles its own Muslim prisoners—had closed.

It's the same with their outrage over the treatment of the protesters in Hong Kong.

Their condemnation of the violence of the Chinese state is

Care workers, who have arguably endured the brunt of the outbreak dealing with the high infection levels in care homes, won't benefit from the pay rise.

Instead of being paid by central government they're paid by local authorities or outsourced to private companies.

And most NHS workers are exempt from the new deal because they are locked into a shoddy three-year deal that was agreed in 2018.

Now is the time to start a renewed fight for workers' pay—for those in the public and private sector.

Trade unions should mount battles to fight for pay for their members.

It's a good time to pile pressure on the Tories and bosses of private firms to cough up and pay workers.

It's not as if the money isn't there.

By June, the Bank of England's Coronavirus Corporate Financing Facility had handed £16.18 billion to 53 companies to ensure they didn't lose out during the lockdown.

Over jobs, safety and pay it's time for a real fightback.

# HYPOCRISY FROM THE TOP

**B**RITISH POLITICIANS have suddenly discovered they're passionate defenders of human rights again.

This time they want us all to know they care deeply for the Uygher—China's horribly oppressed Muslim minority.

Up to a million Uygher people are locked in internment camps in north west China.

But it's no coincidence that British politicians' sudden concern coincides with a trade war over tech—just one aspect of the

capitalist competition between the West and China.

So Tory and Labour politicians are horrified at images of Uygher people hooded and shackled in prison camps.

You'd think that Guantanamo Bay—where the West hoodis and shackles its own Muslim prisoners—had closed.

It's the same with their outrage over the treatment of the protesters in Hong Kong.

Their condemnation of the violence of the Chinese state is

far stronger than it was for their ally Israel when it massacred Palestinian protesters in 2018.

The Tories suspended arms sales to China on Monday.

They resumed arms sales to Saudi Arabia earlier this month—knowing they'll be used in its war on Yemen.

The rulers of Britain, the US, China and Russia are all guilty of horrific crimes.

They only ever care about the crimes of each other when there's something in it for them.

## Breakfast in



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## ANALYSIS

ADRIAN BUDD



# Huawei ban is about West's tech control

**THE TORIES last week announced the removal of Chinese technology firm Huawei from Britain's new 5G network**

This followed earlier decisions to limit Huawei involvement and exclude it from sensitive "core" parts of the developing network. All Huawei equipment is set to be removed by 2027.

Scientists have not found a security threat—a so-called "back door"—in Huawei products.

Meanwhile, hackers and data thieves operate without controlling the design and construction of hardware.

Yet, the Tories argue that the decision was taken on national security grounds.

The West, particularly the US, has long argued that Huawei is closely linked to the Chinese state, and that its technologies are used to promote Chinese state interests.

It is the world's largest supplier of telecoms equipment, dwarfing rivals such as Samsung and the European firms Ericsson and Nokia. These firms are likely to be the chief beneficiaries of the British government's decision.

Donald Trump's government has contemplated strategic tie-ups to give them a boost.

## Excluded

Although 170 countries use Huawei equipment, US allies such as Australia, New Zealand and Japan have excluded the firm from their 5G systems.

Under US pressure, Canada arrested Huawei's chief financial officer, and company founder's daughter, Meng Wanzhou in December 2018. She was accused of fraud and breach of sanctions against Iran.

There has been a tightening of US restrictions on Huawei under Trump.

Two years ago the sale of US microchips to Huawei was restricted.

When US firms evaded this by selling chips made elsewhere the restrictions were extended to cover any chips made using US technology.

Since all the world's major chipmakers use some US machine tools, Huawei was effectively forced out of lucrative 5G markets.

Britain's decision, like those of other US allies, was taken after the US threatened to exclude it from intelligence sharing.

The deadline of 2027 allows time for telecoms firms to extricate Huawei from their systems.

For instance, telecom firm BT agreed to remove Huawei gear from its networks in December 2018, but in April 2020 delayed this in the absence of alternative suppliers.

But while technical and logistical concerns underpin the detail of these decisions they are fundamentally shaped by the recent increase in tensions between the West and China.

The US blames China for this.

The pressures on Western firms, the scale of China's global industrial espionage, the Hong Kong crackdown, border clashes with India, and China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea are cited as evidence.

## Sophisticated

But the US is at the centre of the world's most sophisticated and extensive surveillance and communications networks, and remains the world's most powerful military and economic power.

Blaming China provides an excuse for the US to attempt to re-assert its global role and corral the rest of the West behind it in a system of global rivalry.

Although it is currently similar to superfast 4G there is no consensus that 5G holds the future for telecoms.

The industrial use of 5G—connecting systems of interrelated computing devices, mechanical and digital machines technology—remains largely untested.

But the US fears that 5G could eventually underpin a global system of smart integration, which links industrial processes as well as consumer goods.

It fears that Huawei could jam Western telecoms—with major military consequences—or use stolen Western data for competitive advantage.

The solution is not more tension but an end to economic competition and imperialist rivalry.

Adrian Budd is author of *Class, States and International Relations*

**FIRMS ARE planning swingeing job cuts—and workers are set to pay the price**

# Soaring numbers are out of work—resist jobs slaughter

by **SADIE ROBINSON**

**WORKERS IN Britain face a "jobs bloodbath" as bosses look to make cuts to shore up their profits.**

The warning came from manufacturing trade group Make UK, which said that more than half of its members plan redundancies in the next six months.

Nearly one in ten firms plan to make between a quarter and half their workforce redundant.

The findings follow a survey of 7,400 firms by the British Chamber of Commerce last week. It found that nearly a third of businesses in Britain expect to cut jobs in the next three months. And nearly a third have already made cuts.

Unemployment could reach four million by the end of the year. The latest firms to cut jobs include Pizza Express, Marks & Spencer and Ted Baker.

The number of people out of work soared by nearly 650,000 in three months, according to figures released last week.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) found that there were 649,000 fewer "payroll employees" in June this year compared to March, when the lockdown began. It's a fall of 2.2 percent.

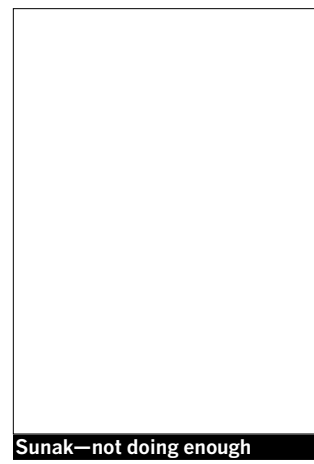
And the figure does not include the estimated

9.4 million jobs that have been furloughed on the government's "job retention" scheme.

Peta, a lecturer at the University of Liverpool, is set to lose her job this week because the university is not renewing her fixed term contract.

"There's around 235 of us going," she told Socialist Worker. "I've worked here for 23 years. They say because of the pandemic there are fewer students, so less money."

"But they're just using it as an excuse to cut the wages



Sunak—not doing enough

bill—they've wanted to cut it for ages."

The reality could be even worse than the ONS figures. The Resolution Foundation think tank said the way unemployment is recorded might not reflect the "true scale of joblessness".

The ONS found that the number of hours worked in Britain has seen the steepest fall since records began in 1971. TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady complained, "Ministers are watching from the side lines instead of saving jobs."

## Forgiven

She's right to call for more support for workers. But many could be forgiven for thinking that the union leaders aren't doing much either.

The jobs massacre will rapidly intensify when the Tories' furlough scheme ends in October. And chancellor Rishi Sunak's claims to be boosting jobs don't add up.

He pledged £30 billion of investment in support for workers in his Summer Statement. But even the pro-market Institute for Fiscal Studies think tank said this is partly funded by making cuts elsewhere.

We urgently need resistance to the jobs massacre.

# Young people hit hard

**THE NUMBER of young people claiming Universal Credit (UC) or Jobseekers Allowance has doubled under the lockdown.**

**More than one in six people aged between 18 and 24 now claim unemployment benefits in some areas of Britain.**

**BBC analysis of official figures found that parts of Liverpool and Blackpool have been worst hit.**

**The closure of pubs, cafes and restaurants due to the lockdown have contributed to the figures. Some 2.6**

**million people are currently claiming UC or Jobseeker's Allowance. A fifth of them are aged between 18 and 24.**

**There are nearly 50 constituencies with more than 15 percent of young people on out-of-work benefits.**

**Walton in Liverpool is worst-hit, with 18.6 percent.**

**Andrew Adams from Liverpool said he is applying for four or five jobs a week.**

**"I'm getting no response," he said. "It makes me feel kind of hopeless."**



**Got a story?**

Email ideas to [reports@socialistworker.co.uk](mailto:reports@socialistworker.co.uk)

# Global rises in Covid-19 cases show up dangers

The easing of lockdown measures has had some catastrophic consequences, writes **Nick Clark**

**THE WORLD** Health Organisation (WHO) recorded two consecutive record daily increases in coronavirus cases across the globe last Friday and Saturday.

The latest daily figures, released on Saturday, recorded 259,848 new cases in 24 hours—the highest in a single day.

The previous WHO record for new cases was 237,743, the number reached on Friday.

The number of deaths reported was 7,360—the biggest one-day increase since 10 May.

It shows that, as governments ease lockdown restrictions and talk about returning to normality, the pandemic is still raging.

The biggest increases reported were from the US, Brazil, India and South Africa.

In the US, researchers at the Johns Hopkins University say there are 70,000 new cases a day.

The virus is surging across the south and west. The government's Centers For Disease Control and Prevention forecasts that 170,000 people in the US could have died of Covid-19 by 8 August.

Yet President Donald Trump has resisted lockdown measures in the interests of keeping businesses open.

Trump also reportedly wants to block money to fund state-run testing and tracing, apparently so that fewer cases are recorded.

## Infected

Black and Latinx people, disproportionately represented in low paid, unsafe jobs, are three times as likely to be infected as white people.

They are twice as likely to die from the virus.

It's a similar picture in Brazil, where there have been over two million recorded virus cases.

Far right president Jair Bolsonaro complained that lockdown measures "suffocated" the country's economy.

Meanwhile lockdowns are being reimposed across the world—including in places that supposedly

## BACK STORY

Saturday of last week saw the highest number of US recorded new virus cases in a day

- Some 259,848 cases were recorded, and 7,360 deaths
- Cases are rising in countries that have eased lockdowns
- The biggest rises are in the US, Brazil, India and South Africa
- Some countries have brought back restrictions as a result
- But others are resisting this as it hits bosses' profits

managed the first wave of the coronavirus outbreak well.

In Israel, right wing prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu declared a "major outbreak" on Friday as the number of cases passed 10,000 for the first time.

Netanyahu initially congratulated himself on his handling of coronavirus, and eased lockdown measures. The number of cases then surged.

Now, rather than impose a full lockdown again, Netanyahu's government has come up with a complicated set of rules designed to keep businesses running.

Shops will be told to close, but only on weekends. Gatherings of ten people indoors, and 20 people outdoors will be banned, except for in workplaces. Restrictions on movement and beaches are also set to be imposed, but not until Friday of next week.

In Barcelona, the Catalan government told people to stay at home unless "strictly necessary" to go out after cases there tripled in the past week.

The scale of the pandemic warns of the catastrophic consequences of easing lockdowns and returning to "normality" in the interests of business.



## On other pages...

The private firms making a killing from Covid >>Pages 10&11

**DONALD TRUMP** opposes lockdown measures in the interests of business

PICTURE: GAGE SKIDMORE/FICKR

## AUSTRALIA

# Response to Victoria outbreak treats working class people as 'expendable'

THE AUSTRALIAN state of Victoria recorded 363 new coronavirus cases last Saturday amid growing anger at how the authorities are failing to protect people.

Victoria's premier Daniel Andrews has announced that face masks will be compulsory across the city of Melbourne.

But the authorities are refusing to bring in measures that could really keep people safe—while trying to blame ordinary people for the outbreak.

Local teacher and socialist Chris Breen told Socialist Worker that the response from the top shows that "ordinary people are expendable".

"There's been a bit of outrage over how the government has handled things," he said.

"Public housing towers that had cases of Covid got put into a hard lockdown.

"People had very little notice—they couldn't get food or insulin for diabetes. Hundreds of police turned up to enforce the lockdown.

"The vast majority of people in the towers are from migrant or refugee backgrounds. In two of



Signs in a locked down housing tower

them, there were no virus cases at all—but they were locked down anyway. Yet private housing blocks with cases weren't locked down."

One resident of a locked down tower, Tekeste Hailu, told ABC news, "We're treated like criminals. 'I just feel like, why only us?'"

Chris said there has been a "racist attempt to shift blame" from the real culprits in the government.

"The outbreak has been caused by the leaking of cases from the government's quarantine hotels," he explained.

"These are where Australian citizens returning to the country are put. In Victoria, they are run by security guards who were subcontracted and poorly paid.

"One told a news programme that they had as little as five minutes' training, and not enough masks or gloves. The guards shared lifts with people in the hotels.

"There was an outbreak among the guards, and it spread from there. Now there's a huge ideological offensive as the government refuses to take responsibility."

Chris said all workers should have "pandemic leave" because "a lot of the spread is happening in workplaces".

"We need mass testing, and more contact tracers," he said. "In the public housing towers, they should have removed the people with the virus and quarantined them.

"But the authorities didn't mind if people were trapped inside passing Covid among themselves."

Instead of protecting people, the authorities are using police and the army to fine them for "trivial breaches" of lockdown.

"They're not prepared to spend the money that's needed to deal with it," said Chris.

"Again and again, they won't put health before profit."



# Black Lives strike hits 160 cities across US

Workers' action on Monday showed the anger at racism and poor conditions, says **Sophie Squire**

**TENS OF thousands of workers in 160 different cities across the US participated in the "Strike for Black Lives" on Monday.**

The strikes were organised by The Movement for Black Lives. Trade unions including the United Farm Workers union and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) supported them.

Campaigns such as the Fight for \$15 and the climate strike movement also backed the strikes.

Workers either went on strike or stopped work for eight minutes and 46 seconds. That's how long police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on George Floyd's neck for before Floyd died.

Service industry worker Linda told Socialist Worker she was taking part to "make a stand". "I have a chance to be with a collective movement of people who are equally furious as to why black people do not deserve basic rights," she said.

Around 1,500 janitors in San Francisco, California, struck early in the morning according to Fight for \$15.

And 1,400 food market workers held a work stoppage in the Bronx. Hundreds of workers from New York also rallied outside Trump Tower.

In the Yakima valley in Washington, hundreds of grape workers stopped for eight minutes and 46 seconds. Workers from five care homes in Detroit, Michigan, walked off the job.

## Home

"Thousands of workers and residents have needlessly lost their lives," explained nursing home worker Trece Andrews.

"I've seen how this virus is devastating the black community, exposing the systemic racism that has always existed."

Across Florida, fast food workers stopped work. And at an Oakland McDonald's, strikers climbed onto the roof to put up banners demanding justice for black lives, PPE and dignity. Lecturers and other

## BACK STORY

**A "Strike for Black Lives" took place in the US on Monday**

- It saw workers including fast food staff, care home workers and others walk off the job

- Strikers said the coronavirus pandemic has exposed systemic racism in the system

- Some also complained of poor working conditions and lack of personal protective equipment

- As Donald Trump sends federal forces to attack anti-racists, more strikes can boost the resistance

education workers took action to demand that Valencia college—in the same state—allow them to join a union and to organise.

Symone from California, who works in the not for profit sector, told Socialist Worker why she didn't work on Monday.

"Because of the pandemic, many people are noticing the ways the economy is broken, and especially how the economy exploits and burdens black people," she said.

"A strike for black lives is using our power as workers to bring attention to racist police violence and the many other ways that racism kills us."

The inspiring action shows that it's possible for workers to strike over oppression. And when workers are united against racism, they can gain more confidence to fight for better wages and conditions.

The action came as US president Donald Trump sent federal forces to attack anti-racism protesters in Portland, Oregon. He has threatened to do the same in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Baltimore and Oakland.

Workers' strikes can play a key role in resisting this repression.



**On other pages...**

Terrorism Act 2000—20 years of increased racism >>> **Page 18**

## France



**HEALTH WORKERS** protesting in France on Bastille Day

PICTURE: CGT SANTE ACTION SOCIALE

# Struggle wins pay rise from Macron, but health workers protest for more

by **CHARLIE KIMBER**

MASS DEMONSTRATIONS, strikes and consistent campaigning have forced the French government to give a pay rise to health workers.

But many workers are angry that the amount is too small, and that other crucial improvements have been largely ignored.

Pay will rise by 183 euros (£166) a month on average. But the increase comes in two lumps.

One nursing union said, "Health workers will not get a cent this year. There is nothing extra on salaries before February 2021. We want 300 euros more a month now, not 90 euros retroactively, one year after Covid-19."

## Promised

The government has promised £7 billion extra for health. But that is nothing compared to the billions of pounds that are being showered on big business.

President Emmanuel Macron's administration handed £10 billion to just two companies—Renault and Air France.

They went on to lay off tens of thousands of workers. Three

union federations, representing the majority of health workers, have signed up to the deal. Two have rejected it.

Mireille Stivala, general secretary of the CGT health union, said the proposed rise would not bring health workers to the European average and was "disappointing". She stressed that without a battle, there would have been less.

On 14 July—which commemorates the storming of the Bastille during the 1789 French Revolution—the government held a hypocritical "thank you" procession for health workers.

On the same day many thousands of health workers demonstrated in cities across France. They repeated their demands for a 300 euro rise now, an end to closures and cuts, and a real injection of funds for health.

In Paris the protest was met with tear gas.

As Macron tries to restart big business profits, he faces continuing opposition.

Around 10,000 people joined a militant anti-racist demonstration in Beaumont-sur-Oise near to Paris last Saturday. It remembered Adama Traore, who was killed

by police on his 24th birthday in July 2016. The protest brought together groups of mainly young, black, anti-racists in the "Generation Adama" movement and "Generation Climate" activists.

A popular banner read, "Generation Adama plus Generation Climate equals Generation Revolution."

One activist told the rally, "We want to breathe, breathe and not be killed by cops, and breathe not be stifled by pollution and a world where human life is extinguished."

## Resignation

Assa Traore, a leading campaigner and Adama's sister, called for a mass demonstration to demand the resignation of the judge in charge of the case.

The judge has refused to hear new evidence of how the police acted.

Assa said, "The Adama committee has always fought social and racial discrimination.

"Our fight takes place alongside the struggles of cleaners, the undocumented, the Yellow Vests and today we're all on the same side and we have to overthrow the system that oppresses us all."



## Celebrate anti-racist statutes

THE PULLING down of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol will go down as an iconic image and act of the explosion of rage of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Colston, Bristol's celebrated "father figure", was in fact a brutal slaver whose wealth was gained by the murder and brutalisation of thousands of black men, women and

### A symbol of defiance

children. Our city should honour those who pulled it down.

The statue by artist Marc Quinn of Jen Reid giving a black power salute on the empty plinth should have been something we could all have enjoyed.

The statue captures beautifully a sense of pride, defiance and resistance. It puts centre stage the leading of role young black women play in the struggle for liberation.

We can debate whether this should have been a permanent replacement.

Quinn himself said it was made to be temporary. But it was a fantastic artistic intervention which hundreds of people went to the city centre to see.

The shame is our Labour mayor and council moved within 24 hours to bring down the statue.

**Huw Williams**  
Bristol



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

## New law in Philippines spells danger for all political activists

PHILIPPINES PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte finally passed the dangerous new anti-terror bill into law this month.

The law suspends habeas corpus—the right for a person under arrest to appear before a judge.

And it includes an expanded crackdown on suspected "terrorists" living outside the country, and the suppression of "terroristic" expressions on traditional and social media.

The country has had a strict lockdown since March, when the military and police were deployed throughout the country to control the spread of Covid-19.

The government has weaponised the crisis to crack down on critics, the media, and the opposition.

Duterte has led Operation

Sauron—a military initiative to crack down on Communist guerrillas and their sympathisers.

Between January and August 2019, Operation Sauron killed 87 rights, land, and environmental activists and community organisers in the Visayas region of the Philippines.

The anti-terror law now legitimises the extra-judicial killings, illegal detentions, and the suppression of freedom of expression and the media in the Philippines.

London-based NGO Global Witness in 2019 released their comprehensive report on the human rights situation and environmental protection in several conflict areas across the globe. It revealed that the Philippines was the most

dangerous country for land and environmental defenders.

Victims included indigenous community leaders, activists, community organisers, even lawyers, and members of religious organisations.

They are not the only targets of Duterte's murderous regime.

Duterte's "war on drugs" is estimated to have claimed 20,000 lives through extra-judicial killings and legitimate police operations.

Duterte and his regime is currently under investigation by the United Nations and the International Criminal Court for state-sponsored killings and crimes against humanity.

It's time to bring justice to Duterte.

**Rogelio Braga**  
South London

## System offers no justice for survivors of rape

THE horrifying experience of rape victims was shown last week in a series of revelations about their treatment. A major report declared the drop in prosecutions so dramatic that it warned, "What we are witnessing is the decriminalisation of rape."

Just three days later official figures showed Tory rules meant that 900 women had to disclose their child was conceived as a result of rape to claim benefits.

The Tories don't care about victims of sexual violence—in fact, they make them jump through hoops to be able to claim benefits. And the drop in prosecutions show police and prosecution authorities aren't taking complaints seriously.

Women deserve better than this. We need to mount huge campaigns demanding justice for survivors.

**Naomi Bell**  
Manchester

## Population is not key climate question

IN THE 1960s and 1970s influential academics like Paul Ehrlich were making gloomy predictions about the impending environmental catastrophe caused by population growth.

But now the world is facing the prospect of a massive decline in the number of children being born across the globe.

Countries such as Japan and Italy will see their populations halved, which makes their restrictive immigration controls absurd.

### Too many?

But should environmentalists be celebrating?

Even today the Malthusian view that

environmental degradation is caused by population growth is prevalent amongst many environmentalists.

We all agree that the world is on the edge of an environmental precipice.

But the idea that this is caused by a growth in human numbers is to ignore the real culprit—an economic system that is wasting the planet at an accelerating rate in the name of profit.

**John Sinha**  
North London

Just a thought...

## Franklin not vile Watson

IT IS great news that the name of a Norwich street, named after eugenicist and DNA scientist James Watson, will be changed.

It will now be named after my aunt, pioneering chemist Rosalind Franklin, about whom Watson was patronising and sexist.

**Shirley Franklin**  
Hampshire

## DSS no reason to ban tenants

I WAS delighted to see the courts recently rule that it was illegal to refuse to let a flat to a woman because she received benefits.

The widespread "No DSS" rule discriminates against people in desperate situations who often need housing the most.

Now we need to fight for rent control, secure tenancies and better conditions for tenants.

**Janet Dyer**  
East London

## Councils have no choice

I READ your article "Councils use virus to plan grim new cuts" (Socialist Worker, 15 July). Referring to councils who "want to" cut social care day places and support for parents is misleading.

Local authorities massively stepped up to support people with volunteer delivery schemes through lockdown and have processed record numbers of benefit claims.

I think it is unfair and unhelpful to portray councils as the villains when they're being backed into a corner by this government.

**Kate Rix**  
On Facebook

● I SUSPECT that many councils who were already facing cuts will use the immediate crisis to make structural long term cuts in services that they had been afraid to make otherwise.

I don't think the article explained this and was focussed on councils that had become dependent on commercial investments which is a different but no less scandalous issue.

**Arthur Nicoll**  
On Facebook



# THE PRIVATE FIRMS MAKING A KILLING FROM COVID

Under the cover of coronavirus, the Tories have used the real need to stock up on personal protective equipment and other much needed supplies to hand over billions of pounds to private companies. Tomáš Tengely-Evans investigates

AS HOSPITALS, ambulances and care homes rapidly ran out of personal protective equipment (PPE) back in March, and danger among the public grew, fear swept through Whitehall. Politicians and senior civil servants knew there could be a social explosion if the problem wasn't solved.

Amid the panic, the Tory government issued around 600 contracts—worth a staggering £5.5 billion—as part of its coronavirus response.

The majority of the contracts were given to businesses already leaching off the public sector, but at least a quarter went to first-time suppliers.

An investment fund from the City of London, a pest control company and a tea, cocoa and spice dealer based out of an east London house are among those joining the outsourcing spree.

One of the firms asked to supply protective kit for health workers was denounced for “putting people's lives at risk” at its own warehouses. By chance, the firm turned out to be run by a prominent Tory donor.

The NHS—already a favourite target for privatisation—is at the centre of the new wave. One of the biggest chunks of public cash was given to private firms that said they could supply PPE.

The NHS had been hammered by a decade of Tory budget cuts and privatisation. It faced an acute staffing crisis and lack of beds. As the virus hit and staff were without even the basics, workers began falling ill and dying.

For bosses, it was an opportunity. The Tories invoked Article 32 of the Public Contracts Regulations of 2015, allowing

them to hand out contracts to specific firms without worrying about making the process transparent by following the normal competitive tendering rules.

The whole outsourcing model is a race to the bottom anyway.

When a contract is published, companies compete to supply goods and services at the lowest possible cost, then drive down workers' wages, conditions and standards to maximise profits. They often then subcontract operations to other firms with even lower costs in a bid to grab even more money.

Implementing Article 32 meant there were huge opportunities to profit.

As the scandal over PPE shortages grew, the Tories began asking for protective kit from anyone who would promise to supply it.

Around 16,000 potential suppliers contacted a 500-person buying team set up by the Cabinet Office in March to offer to supply kit for hospital staff.

This in itself turned into a £200,000 business opportunity for a call centre supplier, which was tasked with going

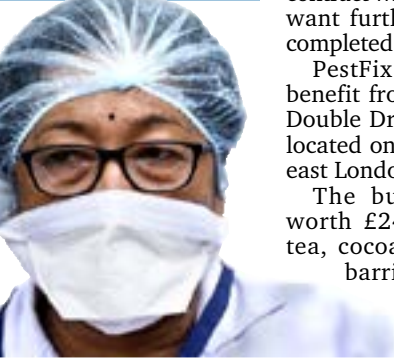
**OUTSOURCING BRITAIN**

Under the Tories, ever more services are being handed over to the private sector

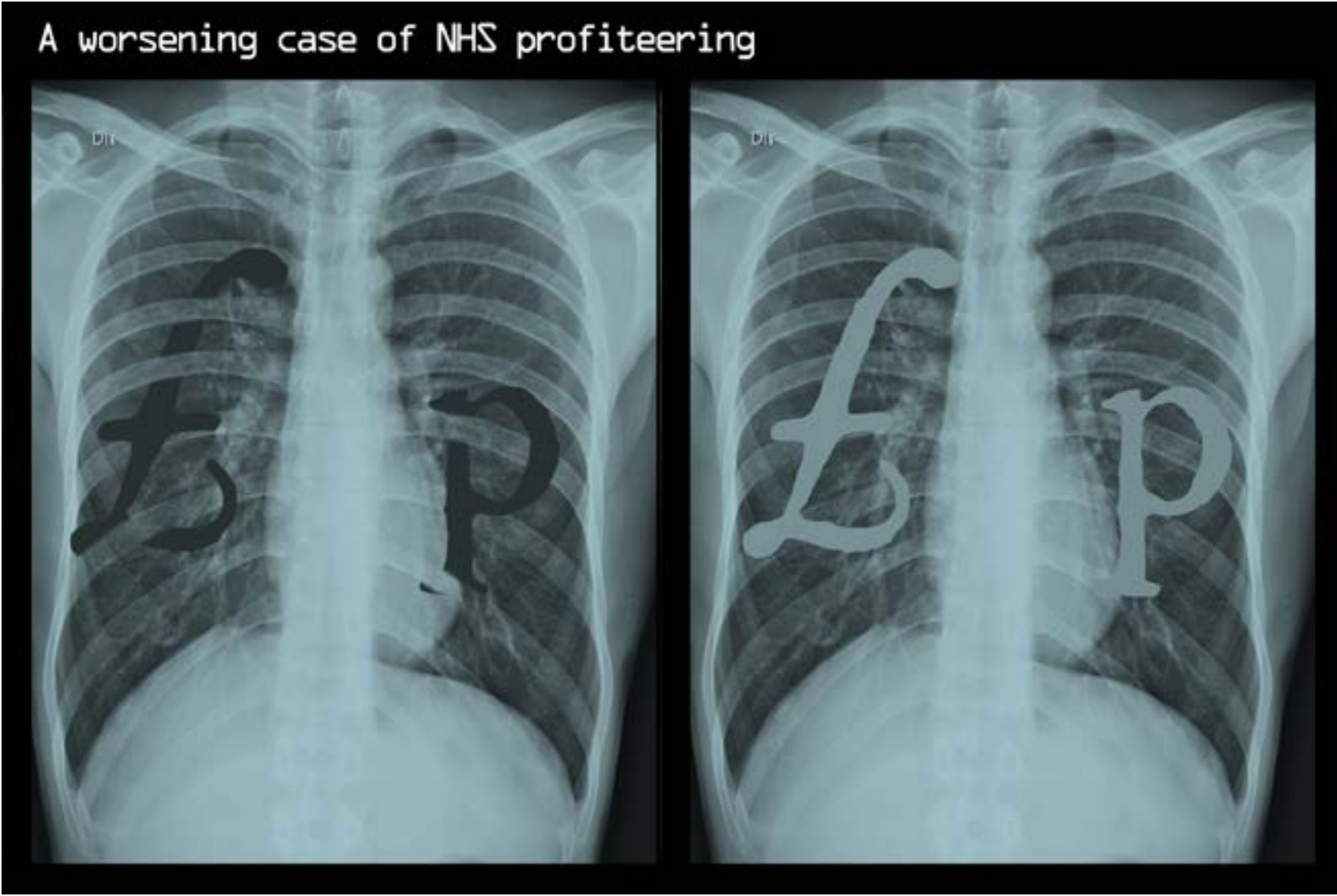
**£3.5 trillion** worth of tenders since 2012

**£1.8 trillion** worth of contracts awarded since 2012

**13.6%** of Britain's gross domestic product is the equivalent value of all the contracts



“The NHS—already a favourite target for privatisation—is at the centre of a new wave of outsourcing



through a backlog of thousands of offers.

One big winner was Crisp Websites Limited—a pest control company trading under the name Pest Fix Limited. It grabbed a contract worth almost £32 million for isolation suits.

The company doesn't produce any PPE and does not have any history in health. It has assets worth £18,000 and employs 16 workers based in Littlehampton in West Sussex. Why was it given a contract?

Dan England, PestFix's co-founder, claimed it won one because it was small enough to be “dynamic”. He boasted that it had “a thriving supply chain with China before the contract”.

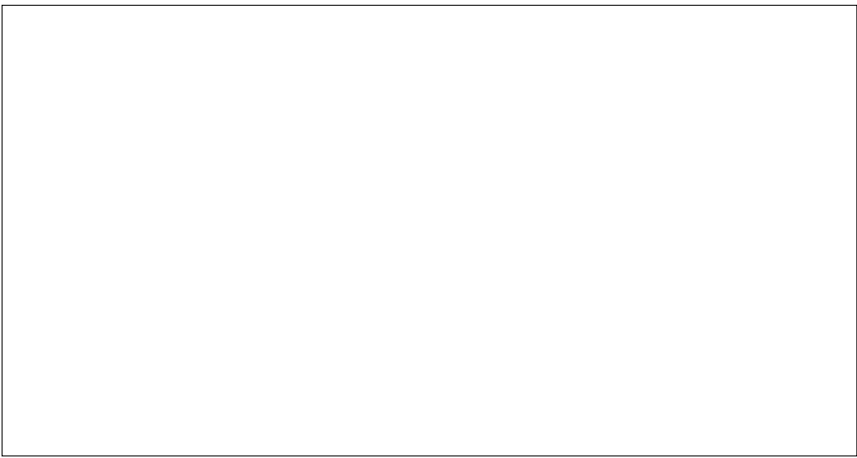
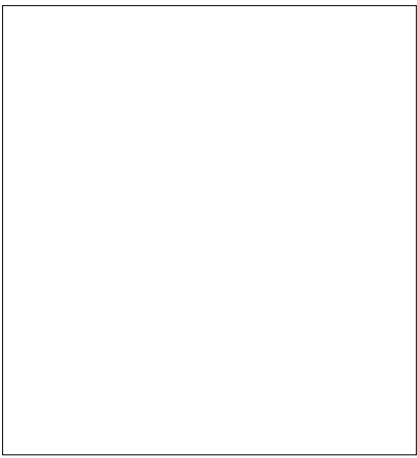
But non-profit group the Good Law Project is seeking a judicial review of the PestFix contract. It said that a “big market participant” told it that “no one in the market knew that the contract was up for grabs”.

The Good Law Project is asking why only one firm bid for the contract and where, if anywhere, it was published.

Lawyers want to know why the government didn't publish the notice stating that it had awarded PestFix the contract within 30 days as required. They want further answers to why the full completed contract was not published.

PestFix isn't the only company to benefit from the PPE crisis. Another is Double Dragon International, an outfit located on a residential street in Ilford, east London.

The business, which has assets worth £24,0000, usually deals with tea, cocoa and spices. This wasn't a barrier to it securing a £2 million contract to provide surgical masks and other equipment for the NHS.



£26 million. The test and trace system is the other area taking the lion's share of NHS outsourcing money.

Subcontracting giant Serco won the £45.8 million contract to manage the coronavirus test and trace system.

It came only a few months after it was fined £1 million for failings in other contracts. Serco CEO Rupert Soames boasted that it would “cement the position of the private sector” in the NHS supply chain.

In a letter to staff, Soames said, “There are a few, a noisy few, who would like to see us fail because we are private companies delivering a public service.

“I very much doubt that this is going to evolve smoothly, so they will have plenty of opportunity to say I told you so.”

And so it transpired. The entire system of test and trace has been a disaster beset with software problems, data failing to reach public health bodies on time and staff employed to do vital

Tory donor and boss of Clipper Logistics Steve Parkin (top) has been a major beneficiary of the break up of the NHS supplies network. Parkin goes to the party's 'Leader Group' fundraising events where he can meet 'stars' such as Boris Johnson (above)

## PPE supply firm boss delivers cash to Tories

PRIVATISATION OF the NHS Supply Chain by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown's Labour governments paved the way for the chaos of delivering PPE.

In fact, at the beginning of the coronavirus crisis, the problem wasn't even a lack of gloves, masks or aprons. The problem was getting them to the right places.

The Tory solution was to bring in the army—and an array of private companies, some of which already had the ear of ministers. One of them, Clipper Logistics, is linked to the Tories and has a bad record on coronavirus health and safety.

It executive chair Steve Parkin is a top donor to the Tories, giving them almost £1 million. He handed the party £25,000 in the run-up to last year's general election.

Parkin attends the party's “Leader Group” meals, where he can wine and dine with influential figures.

Meanwhile, Parkin's workers complained of being “crammed into corridors” and having to wait for “weeks” to get hand sanitiser.

The company usually delivers to high street shops.

One former Clipper Logistics worker described working conditions at the warehouse. “It's not good,” she explained. “The corridors are tiny, there's been no hand sanitiser for weeks apart from in the offices.

“We just thought that for everybody's safety they'd just shut it down because we're non-essential, but they didn't.”

When the worker raised concerns over social distancing, a manager replied, “At this time all I care is about getting refunds processed.”

The worker said, “When I voiced my opinions and said I felt unsafe one manager said, 'Just think of how many people die of cancer every year'.”

Another worker at the warehouse said there was just “no social distancing”. They said, “I live with my mum who's got an underlying health condition and is at risk. It is really worrying me.

“I do think they're putting people's lives at risk. There's easily 100 to 200 people in the hallway, all having to press the same security buttons, having to clock out with the same

“Clipper Logistics chair Steve Parkin has given the Tories nearly £1 million



NHS Purchasing and Supplies Agency arm of the health service was broken up under the last Labour government and the NHS Logistics section handed over to German company DHL (above, right)

Department for Education Five contracts worth £297 million

The biggest, worth £234 million, went to Ednred (UK Group) Ltd, to provide free school meals when schools are closed.

It allows school to get supermarket vouchers for parents of children who are eligible for free school meals.

The government said the contract was given under the Article 32 rule.

Consulting contracts 30 contracts worth £34 million

These have been given for “consulting services”. The accountancy firm PwC, formerly PricewaterhouseCoopers, has snatched the most—seven contracts, worth nearly £10 million.

Department for Transport 17 contracts, worth £33 million

Handed to companies including P&O Ferries and the Eurostar rail operator.

The companies are asked to “reserve freight capacity to ensure the uninterrupted supply of critical goods including food and medical products” in the event of an emergency.

Crown Commercial Service Three contracts worth £195 million

The Crown Commercial Service (CCS) is a Cabinet Office agency that manages outsourcing and procurement across departments.

They include a £2 million contract for Zoom licenses and 11 contracts worth £193 million for ventilators.

These included £136 million for Penlon, £21 million for Cogent Tech and £14.5 million for Plexus Corp.



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

## INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

## REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

## THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

## INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties.

We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to [www.swp.org.uk](http://www.swp.org.uk) or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

## Socialist Workers Party online meetings



The Socialist Workers Party is holding online meetings during the coronavirus crisis. This is to ensure that there can still be collective local discussion, organising and actions.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and at the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page [facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty](https://facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty) for news of national online meetings and other updates.

SUPPORTERS OF Israel brand the left antisemitic

## Starmer, Palestine and Labour's shift to the right

## BRADFORD

Thu 30 Jul, 7pm  
830-6472-2380

## COVENTRY

Wed 29 Jul, 7.30pm  
823-945-1917

## LONDON: HACKNEY

Thu 30 Jul, 7.30pm  
798-534-2585

## BRIGHTON &amp; HOVE

Thu 30 Jul, 6.30pm  
818-1857-1448

## EDINBURGH

Wed 29 Jul, 7.30pm  
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## Racism and mental health

Fri 24 Jul, 6.30pm  
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## Lenin at 150—why his ideas still matter

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## Anger to revolution—what makes people rise up?

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## AND PERTH

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## All the statues should fall—confronting the legacy of slavery and empire

Thu 30 Jul, 8.15pm  
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## LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE

## All the statues should fall—confronting the legacy of slavery and empire

Thu 6 Aug, 6.30pm  
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## LEEDS

## How can Palestine be free?

Thu 30 Jul, 7.15pm  
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## The revolutionary ideas of Angela Davis

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## The bloody history of the British Empire

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## LONDON: SOUTH

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## LONDON: SOUTH EAST

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## SWANSEA

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# The Streets moved on, but lost something on the way

Mike Skinner's return showcases brilliant musical talent, but *None of Us Are Getting Out of This Life Alive* is not as sharp lyrically, says **Richard Donnelly**

**NONE OF Us Are Getting Out of This Life Alive** is the first record to be produced by Mike Skinner's *The Streets* for nine years.

The lasting popularity of *The Streets*' first two albums means that Skinner's return is exciting. But his new offering is not an attempt to relive past glories.

Instead *The Streets* heads in a fresh direction, working alongside a wealth of less-established artists from a range of musical scenes.

The result is a diverse and experimental record that is much more dreamlike than Skinner's earlier, earthier work.

Some of the best music on this record was produced in collaboration with artists influenced by psychedelia. Collaborators include psych-rock act Tame Impala and the incredible London soul singer Greentea Peng.

There are brilliant contributions from hip-hop and grime stars such as Ms Banks and Donae'o. Skinner also brings in less-prominent rappers such as Kasien and Jesse James Solomon.

## Experimental

The album offers moments of experimental brilliance. But the cutting lyrics of earlier records are sadly missing.

*The Streets*' debut *Original Pirate Material* and the subsequent *A Grand Don't Come For Free* mined sharp observations from the mundanity of every life. It reflected the lives of young working class people at the time with wit and dazzling wordplay.

*The Streets*' description of a hedonistic youth culture of pubs, clubs and drugs always pointed over its shoulder to the underlying realities of Britain under Tony Blair. "Deep-seated urban decay", as the song "Has It Come To This" had it.

Regrettably it also sometimes played to the "lad culture" of the early 00s.

The way that *The Streets* fitted that moment in British society propelled Skinner to fame.

This time many of the lyrics are vacuous, even if they occasionally offer a pretence of depth.

"If god had have dropped acid would god see people?" sounds profound at first but ultimately means nothing.

Accompanying music videos reference Black Lives Matter and coronavirus extensively. But there's not much musical effort to express the mood of these strange times.

For those of us to who Skinner's lyrics once spoke, this will be a disappointment.

*None of Us Are Getting Out of This Life Alive* is out now



A VISION of a society in collapse

## Beautiful but harrowing animation

### TELEVISION

**JAPAN SINKS: 2020**

Available on Netflix now

THIS JAPANESE animation series follows the Mutoh family on a journey of survival as a series

of catastrophic earthquakes destroys society and ultimately sinks Japan.

Based on the 1973 novel, this adaptation by Masaaki Yuasa takes place in a world where the 2020 Tokyo Olympics has just gone ahead.

Its story is sometimes bleak and harrowing, and its messaging occasionally a little confused and troubling.

But the animation—particularly the landscapes—are beautiful, and the storyline intelligent and sensitive.

## Spike Lee's KKK crime film soon to be on Netflix

### FILM

**BLACKKKLANSMAN**

Available now on Netflix

SPIKE LEE film *BlackKkKlansman* is set to be released to Netflix on Friday of this week.

The basis of the film is the true story of Ron Stallworth, Colorado Spring's first black police officer. He goes undercover alongside

Flip Zimmerman, a Jewish officer, to foil the plans of the local Ku Klux Klan.

The film attracted some criticism—including in *Socialist Worker*—for its largely positive portrayal of the police.

But it's also funny, and it cuts to the heart of racism in the early 1970s while drawing parallels with Donald Trump's administration.



*BlackKkKlansman's* undercover cops

## TELEVISION

**STATELESS**

Available now on Netflix

**STATELESS BEGINS** with the rarely-told story of the horrific journey refugees go through to seek safety.

We are introduced to an Afghan family who are desperately trying to get on a boat to Australia.

They get separated with only the father and daughter making it to Australia, where they are immediately locked up in a detention centre out in the desert.

In a parallel story, a young Australian woman undergoing severe mental distress joins a cult, gets kicked out and goes on the run.

This part of the story, based on true events, sees the woman detained in a detention centre after pretending to be a German national and refusing to give her true identity to police.

If anything the real story is far worse than what's presented on screen.

The young woman was initially jailed for six months before being moved to a detention centre, despite showing clear signs of mental distress and only speaking basic German.

As the series develops it is clear the creators are more concerned with the structure of different departments within the immigration system than with politicians.

## Bureaucratic

It seems to see the problem as one of bureaucratic mismanagement rather than a deliberate policy of racism.

I also wanted to know more about the Afghan family, but the story is focused on the white woman.

The detention centre guards are portrayed as mostly good people with only one or two who are very racist. In the programme, guards cover up their bad treatment of refugees.

It's just a glimpse into the reality of these detention centres.

There have been thousands and thousands of complaints about prison guards from Australian detention centres over the decades.

This is not down to a few "bad apples" but a racist system that treats refugees as criminals.

Parts of this series were good and there are some standout performances from an impressive cast of actors. But it can be a little frustrating to watch.

**Jasmine Fischer**



**T**HE Second World Congress of the Communist International, or Comintern, was held in the summer of 1920. It aimed to pull together the best militants across the world to form parties that could repeat the victory of the 1917 Russian Revolution.

Gregory Zinoviev, its first president, wrote, “Decisive struggles confront the world proletariat. We are living through an epoch of open civil wars.

“The crucial hour is at hand. In almost all the countries where there is a workers’ movement of any size, the immediate future holds out for the working class a number of fierce armed conflicts.”

The role of socialist organisation and leadership was crucial.

The Congress had 217 delegates from 67 organisations in 40 different countries. Some represented small groupings, others parties with tens of thousands of members.

Representatives of left wing reformist parties in France, Germany and Italy were wavering between a revolution and reform but ultimately chose a pro-capitalist course.

The Congress, like all left wing events it started late—a week late.

While delegates waited there was a football match between Moscow and an International team. British shop stewards’ leader Willie Gallagher captained the International team, which included US journalist John Reed. They lost heavily in front of a crowd of 18,000.

**A**FTER the Congress opening rally, delegates participated in a mass demonstration before gathering at the former stock exchange to see a play performed by a cast of 3,000 people.

The Russian Revolution saw workers take power in 1917. The Bolshevik party, led by Lenin and Trotsky, argued that socialism was the self-emancipation of the working class, not something granted from above.

They stressed that the capitalist state must be smashed. And they argued that capitalism, as a global system, must be fought on an international basis.

Since the first Congress in 1919, short-lived republics of workers’ control had taken power in Hungary and Bavaria in Germany. Factory occupations spread across Italy. There were mass strikes in Glasgow and Belfast, and the British and French armies revolted.

Anti-colonial revolts erupted across the world including in Iraq, Ireland, India, Egypt, Syria, Morocco, and across the



Lenin addressing delegates at the Uritsky Theatre, painted by Isaak Brodsky

# JULY 1920 A CRITICAL JUNCTURE

The Comintern met for the second time 100 years ago. Simon Basketter looks at how the debates there help us to understand and challenge the capitalist system today



MN Roy

Russian empire. In Congress sessions, the key argument was that you had to have a clear break with reformism but also work to get the mass of workers to also break from reformist leaders.

Delegates were given copies of Trotsky’s Terrorism and Communism, and Lenin’s “Left Wing” Communism—an Infantile Disorder.

The first is a spirited defence of overthrowing the system by taking state power through

**“**Communists argued that a revolutionary party was needed**”**

revolutionary insurrection. The second is a polemic on how revolutionaries should relate to reformist workers and their organisations.

All sorts of parties sent delegations to the Second Congress. Lenin wrote, “The Communist International is to a certain extent becoming fashionable.”

Some reformists tried to use radical rhetoric to cover their attempts to make peace with the system. So the Comintern

laid down tough conditions of membership to emphasise the differences. This was one way of breaking from unaccountable reformist leaders.

Others, having broken from reformism, now didn’t want to work with anyone with reformist ideas.

For instance, when revolution broke out in November 1918 in Germany, pro-capitalist union bureaucrats moved quickly to negotiate for workers. Bosses conceded the eight-hour day.

Workers poured into the unions. The union bureaucracy provided a pro-capitalist buttress against revolution.

So most German Communists were wrongly calling on workers to “get out of the trade unions”.

In a strike that defeated a coup in March 1920 the Communists initially didn’t support the “reformist” strike.

Many favoured building new “unitary organisations” that would combine the functions of a trade union and a political party.

US communists said their task was “the destruction of the existing trade union organisations”. In Lenin’s view, such a stand was “the greatest service communists could render the bourgeoisie”.

Syndicalist union federations comprised the majority of the union movement in France and Spain, and the US-based Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) had won respect.

A wide range of syndicalists, who wanted to destroy capitalism through trade union struggle, resisted the First World War and hailed Russia’s revolution.

At the congress, a proposal to work in reformist-led unions provoked what Zinoviev later called “a most vexatious resistance” from delegates influenced by syndicalism.

Congress produced theses that committed communists to “support syndicalist revolutionary unions”.

**L**ENIN PROPOSED concessions to syndicalist currents, including that the ability of the International’s affiliated parties to lead revolutionary union work must be put to “a practical test”.

The trade union theses finally adopted called for Communists to join unions “in order to turn them into instruments of conscious struggle for the overthrow of capitalism” and to “take the initiative in forming trade unions where none exist”.

The Communists argued that a revolutionary party was needed to overcome divisions.

Some, such as Zinoviev, pointed to the limitations of unions as a vehicle for fundamental change while simultaneously arguing that they could be transformed into revolutionary bodies if they only had the correct leadership. Nonetheless a significant layer of syndicalists were integrated into the International.

A similar productive debate took place over defeating imperialism. At the Second Congress, 11 countries from Asia were represented—a breakthrough for the world socialist movement.

Addressing the Congress, Lenin noted that 70 percent of the world’s population “are either in a state of direct colonial dependence or are semi-colonies”.

The “cardinal idea” underlying the Congress theses on the national and colonial questions, he said, was “the distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations”.

According to these the goal lay in “uniting the proletarians and toiling masses of all nations” in a common struggle “to overthrow the landowners and the bourgeoisie”.

But to achieve that goal “all communist parties must directly support the revolutionary movement among the nations that are dependent and in the colonies”.

**L**ENIN insisted on the need to distinguish between reformist currents that accept the colonial framework and “national-revolutionary movements”, even though the plan of the latter remains “bourgeois-democratic” rather than socialist.

The theses were improved through debate. In part this was because of important interventions by MN Roy from India, who argued that the role of Communists was not just to support nationalism but fight for revolutionary upheaval.

So the theses said Communists should “absolutely maintain the independent character of the proletarian movement, even in its embryonic stage”, in order to defend workers’ interests.

The approach was extended to immigrants in the US, Canada and Australia.

The Congress called for “a vigorous campaign against restrictive immigration laws”, equal wages for non-white workers, and their organisation into the unions.

Again dividing lines were developing.

Giacinto Serrati, leader of the Italian Socialist Party, deplored the ten minutes that was spent discussing black oppression in the US.

His compatriot Antonio Graziadei moved an amendment to weaken “support” of liberation movements down



Gregory Zinoviev (top) was the first president of the Comintern (above), which sat throughout July and August 100 years ago

ABOVE PICTURE: JULES HUBERT-DROZ ARCHIVE/JOHNRIDDELL.COM

to merely taking “an active interest in” them.

But most communists rallied in support of liberation struggles. Communist Parties were formed that year in Turkey, Egypt, Iran, India (in exile), Korea and Indonesia, and the following year in China.

Following the Second Congress, many left social democratic currents split.

Hundreds of thousands of members were won to the new International, others retreated to reformism.

The process helped open the doors to a new generation attracted to the Russian Revolution. Congress debates were a significant step forward in the left’s understanding of how to change the world.

## READ MORE

● **The Comintern** by Duncan Hallas  
[bit.ly/cominternbook](http://bit.ly/cominternbook)

● **The Communist International**  
Various articles and documents relating to the Comintern available on the Marxists Internet Archive  
[bit.ly/cominternMIA](http://bit.ly/cominternMIA)

● **World Revolution—the rise and fall of the Communist International** by CLR James  
[bit.ly/CLRJamescomintern](http://bit.ly/CLRJamescomintern)

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## Labour report will be used to tarnish the left as ‘racist’

A report into alleged antisemitism in the Labour Party will be used as another way to push back activists, says Nick Clark

THE LABOUR Party’s apology to so-called “whistleblowers” who accused it of antisemitism is a warning sign of things to come.

A report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) into Labour’s handling of antisemitism accusations under Jeremy Corbyn is due imminently.

If it says what the right want it to say, it’ll be used to try and bury the left for years—if not decades.

The report will look into whether Labour, or those acting on behalf of the party, have committed unlawful acts and whether it responded to complaints in “a lawful, efficient and effective manner”.

Already there are doubts about the EHRC’s investigation. For a start it was prompted by complaints by the Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA), which considers the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and anti-Zionism to be antisemitic. CAA was set up by pro-Israel activists in response to huge Palestine Solidarity Campaign demonstrations in 2014.

Perhaps more importantly, it “may have regard” to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism and its linked examples.

This definition has been used to brand pro-Palestine campaigning, and the description of Israel as a racist state, as antisemitic. So right wing opponents of Corbyn are confident that the investigation will go their way. The report isn’t tasked with deciding whether Labour became institutionally antisemitic under Corbyn’s leadership, as CAA and the Jewish Labour Movement (JLM) claim. But they will use it as crucial evidence that this is what Labour became under Corbyn’s leadership—and that his left wing politics

made this unavoidable.

The JLM also sees criticism of the nature of the Israeli state as a form of antisemitism.

In an online video on the EHRC report, JLM national secretary Peter Mason said the type of antisemitism inside the Labour party was “new antisemitism”.

This isn’t to do with hatred of Jewish people as Jews but opposition to Israel.

### Slogan

Tellingly, Mason also cast Labour’s election slogan, “For the many not the few” as a product of an antisemitic world view in which “the elite” really means Jewish people.

In the same video MP Margaret Hodge blamed an “anti-European” and “anti-American” culture for the left’s “racism”.

She said Corbynism had made Labour a “racist party” but that miraculously Keir Starmer’s leadership had already turned that around.

She added that more needed to be done against “those who are still in the party”.

The message from the right

**“**This definition of antisemitism has been used to say Palestine campaigning is racist**”**

is that Labour can redeem itself by driving out the left. Even central pillars of the left that have nothing to do with antisemitism—class and anti-war politics—have to become unacceptable.

Starmer’s leadership has already begun paving the way for this, apologising to “whistleblowers” who appeared in a BBC Panorama documentary that accused Labour of antisemitism.

That documentary—and testimonies by the whistleblowers—rested on the idea that the left’s opposition to Israel is antisemitic.

What’s more, there are reports that Labour activists are being placed under investigation simply for challenging the idea that the party or the left has a major problem with antisemitism.

Few will speak publicly for fear of being expelled.

The outcome of all this has consequences not just for the left inside Labour, but for other aspects of the left’s politics.

First and foremost, it will make it harder to campaign against Israel, but will also tarnish anti-austerity, class politics with the brush of antisemitism.

And it will also be used to undermine the left’s anti-racism.

But many are now realising that battles cannot be fought through a machine that’s geared towards expelling you, and on a terrain that forces you to stay silent.

The fight continues to defend the right to call Israel a racist state and to take head on the central accusation that opposition to Israel is antisemitic.



ASSATA SHAKUR

# Revolutionary defied US state repression

by YURI PRASAD

TO BE a black revolutionary in the US in the early 1970s was to accept the likelihood of prison or death. Assata Shakur, who was born JoAnne Deborah Bryon, knew the risks and faced both.

Born in New York in 1947, but raised in the Deep South, she had been brought up to hold her head high and never to cower before white authority.

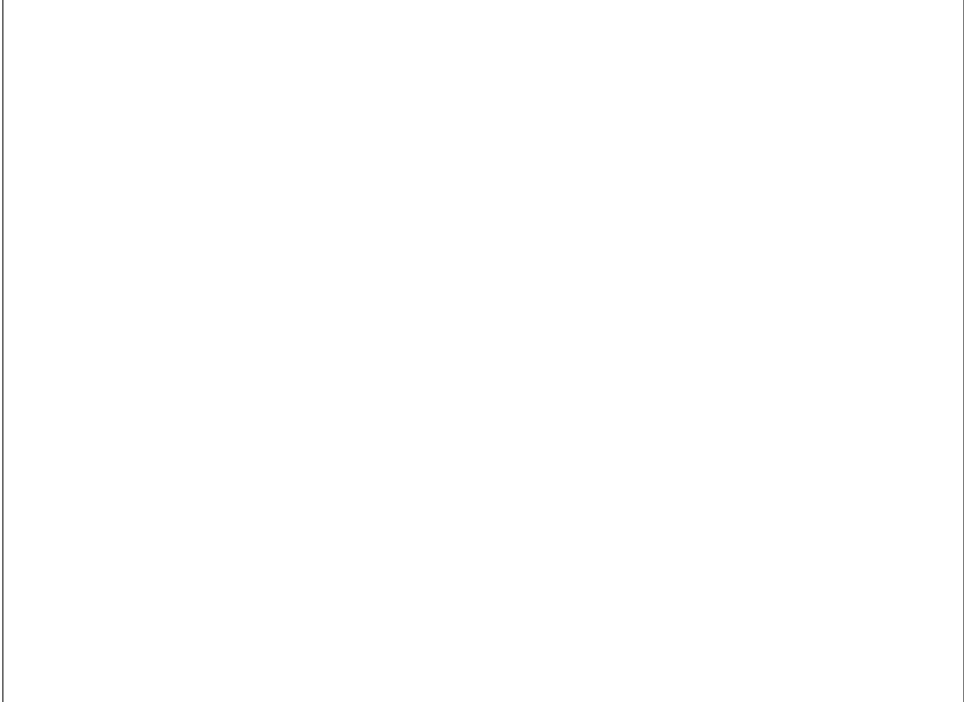
Hardly political until her late teens, she was radicalised by opposition to the Vietnam War. She remembered it hit her as a revelation.

“We’re taught at such an early age to be against communists,” she said. “Yet most of us don’t have the faintest idea what communism is.”

“Only a fool lets somebody else tell him who his enemy is.”

Involvement in the movements that followed led her in 1970 to the Harlem branch of the Black Panther Party.

But she grew critical of the party and left to join a looser



ASSATA SHAKUR

formation known as the Black Liberation Army (BLA).

She split from the Panthers as the organisation was wracked by internal strife and state targeted

assassination.

Some who headed to the BLA saw the Panthers’ social programmes as too “reformist” and felt the BLA should dedicate itself to fighting the

racist state.

A US Justice Department report on the BLA said the group was suspected of involvement in over 70 incidents of violence between

1970 and 1976. And the Fraternal Order of Police blamed the BLA for the murders of 13 police officers.

No one can be sure of the accuracy of these reports.

The BLA was heavily infiltrated by FBI spies intent on discrediting and destroying revolutionary organisations.

But the group itself claimed responsibility for many reprisals against racist police, and for “re-appropriating the funds” of the various banks and drug dealers it robbed.

## Accused

Between April 1971 and January 1973, Shakur was accused of crimes ranging from kidnapping to armed robbery, attempted murder and murder.

On each occasion, she was found not guilty.

In May 1973 she and two BLA members were stopped by police for a traffic violation.

An altercation followed which left one cop and one revolutionary dead.

Shakur was put on trial for the killing of the officer.

In a tape smuggled from prison to supporters she declared, “I have declared war on the rich who prosper on our poverty, the politicians who lie to us with smiling faces, and all the mindless, heartless robots who protect them and their property.”

“I am a Black revolutionary, and, as such, I am a victim of all the wrath, hatred and slander that amerika is capable of. Like all black revolutionaries, amerika is trying to lynch me.”

Shakur was eventually convicted of first degree murder, despite the gunshot wound she received during the shootout making her incapable of firing a gun.

In 1977 she was sentenced to life plus 30 years.

Two years later she broke out of her New Jersey prison and later escaped to Cuba, where she lives today.

The FBI placed Shakur on its “Most Wanted” list, making her the first woman ever to appear on it.

This is part of a series about radical black lives Go to [bit.ly/SWBlackLives](http://bit.ly/SWBlackLives)

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# Racist legacy to blame for Blackburn Covid-19 spike

A sharp increase in coronavirus cases has taken Blackburn back to the brink of lockdown, and some have a racist solution. Yuri Prasad investigates

**WHEN** health chiefs announced this week that Blackburn, Lancashire, was in danger of a renewed coronavirus lockdown Zaffer Khan knew the city's Asian residents would be in the firing line.

The head of the One Voice Blackburn community organisation was born in the town and has learned well to read its mood.

"We've had a sea of media coming here, and many are trying to pick holes in the local mosques," he told Socialist Worker, referring to the way some insist prayer meetings are how the virus has spread.

Recent coronavirus testing put Blackburn on high alert after infection rates jumped from 29.5 to 41 cases per 100,000.

In nearby Pendle the numbers rose from 14.2 to 67.8 over the same period.

But in reality, a legacy of structural racism lies behind Blackburn's spike in Covid-19 cases.

Unlike in Leicester, health authorities haven't been able to identify where the virus has been widely spread at workplaces.

This makes it highly likely that the critical factor is the cramped living conditions that many Asian people are forced to live in.

## Exposing

A ramped up testing regime in the region may also be exposing levels of Covid-19 that remain undetected in other towns.

The figures are significantly lower than Leicester, which dramatically went back into lockdown earlier this month.

But Pendle and Blackburn now rank second and third on the table of areas with high infection rates.

Transmission of the virus seems



BLACKBURN IS on the cusp of another lockdown, but the underlying reasons are ignored

PICTURE: PA

to be through "community spread", with young people under 19 being among the most likely age group to be infected.

Testing since the beginning of the month found an additional 114 cases, of which 97 were people of a South Asian background.

And it is that fact that has triggered a racist response.

Many have been quick to charge that Asians prefer to live in multi-generational housing and that's why the virus is spreading.

But Zaffer says a lot of assertions are based on stereotypes.

"The Asian community here is

diverse. Some people live multi-generational houses, but others are quite middle class and live in houses in Darwen," he said.

"You can't just lump everyone together."

No one chooses to live in houses with too many people, but for many poverty dictates.

Over decades Asian people, and many others, have fought to have their housing needs recognised, but for far too long local authorities and housing associations ignored them.

Now, nearly 12 percent of people in Blackburn live in houses of over five people, while the average across

the north west of England is less than 6.5 percent. "People here are trying their best to stick to the coronavirus rules, and I can say the Muslim community has been impeccable in doing so," says Zaffer.

"But we've had so many mixed messages from the government. And that's why the mood here is quite angry—the blame for what's happening should lie with central government."

**On other pages...**  
The private firms making a killing from Covid-19 >> Pages 10&11

## Suffering from overcrowding

**GOVERNMENT** rules say that a house is overcrowded if two people of different sexes over the age of ten have to share a bedroom.

Nationally, around 2 percent of "white British" people are classified as living in overcrowded housing.

But 7 percent of people who describe themselves as "Indian" are overcrowded, as are 16 percent of "Pakistanis" and a staggering 30 percent of "Bangladeshis".

In households with an income of between £400 and £499 a week, some 2 percent of whites are overcrowded while 14 percent of Asian households are.

## Don't listen to Tory bluster

**BORIS** Johnson was quick to shift the blame for the lockdown in Leicester earlier this month, saying there were "problems getting people to understand" what to do.

It was a nod and a wink to racists who claim Asians can't speak English.

Home secretary Priti Patel then chimed in, suggesting that "cultural sensitivity" had prevented authorities taking action against sweatshop factories that remained open.

Blaming the victim is the classic Tory strategy to divert attention away from its own shoddy record.

## Some boroughs are hit worse

**RESEARCH** by Inside Housing magazine shows there is a strong correlation between overcrowded housing and the areas of Britain worse hit by coronavirus.

The London boroughs of Newham, Brent and Tower Hamlets are among the worst hit by Covid-19 deaths. All three have overcrowding at levels above 15 percent of the population.

They also have large concentrations of people from South Asia.

# Barred from decent homes and forced into ghettos

**FOR** MANY Asian people living in Blackburn, poverty and racism dictates quality of housing.

In the 1960s and 70s it was common to for Asians to be told that there was no room for "people like you" in private boarding houses.

Many councils bowed to prejudice and restricted Asians to particular parts of town, and reserved the most modern housing for white families.

These pressures forced many Asian workers to club together to buy small houses in the cheapest parts of town.

Often they lived many to a room.

Sometimes workers alternated their beds depending on their working shift patterns.

Racists then described this way of living as "squalid", as if it were a willing choice that desperate migrants had made.

As communities became settled and savings accumulated, families from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh joined the men who had gone on ahead to Britain.

As a result, housing demand grew still further.

But the pressure to keep Asians in a ghetto persisted.

For instance, estate agents refused to show perspective buyers houses in "white areas".

Local councils worried



A hostile environment

about allowing an Asian family to live on a white estate.

Against the background of racist attacks that were sickeningly familiar in the 1970s and 80s, many decided to stay in Asian-dominated areas for their own safety.

The patterns of dangerous overcrowding we see today or not the result of "cultural choice".

They come from generations of systemic racism.



# Terrorism Act 2000—20 years of increased racism and harsh injustice

by SARAH BATES

**THE INTRODUCTION of the Terrorism Act 2000 created a “racist, fear-based environment” argues a new report from human rights group Cage.**

In the “20 Years of TACT: Justice under Threat” report, released on Monday, the group claims there is a “two-tier justice system that undermines democratic governance”.

Tony Blair’s Labour government brought in the Terrorism Act. Various governments bolstered it with further pieces of similar legislation in 2005, 2016 and 2020.

Successive legislation was designed to whip up Islamophobia and increase state power, not protect ordinary people.

As of March 2020, some 77 percent of people in prison custody for terror offences are Muslim.

The act is not a useful tool for identifying people guilty of committing terror offences.

Only a tiny minority—11.6 percent—of so-called terror arrests result in terror convictions.

It’s not true that these convictions show the police dramatically thwarting acts of mass violence.

## Convictions

The majority of convictions have been for “pre-crime” offences such as viewing banned material or preparatory activity.

And the way that counter-terrorism legislation is interpreted in the courts means that prosecutors don’t have to prove a defendant’s criminal intent to win a conviction.

This process is “based upon politicised interpretations of statements and discriminatory conceptions of

## BACK STORY

**Anti-terrorism legislation has given the state extra powers to harass and intimidate Muslims**

● The legislation gives officers the right to hold people for up to nine hours without suspicion

● In 2019 research by Cage showed that “potentially close to one million people” have been stopped under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000. And the overwhelming majority—88 percent—have been Muslim

Islamic ‘ideology,’” argues Cage.

It said counter-terrorism cases are “chipping away at a core pillar of due process, and resulting in unsafe convictions”.

The way that the Terrorism Act is designed targets Muslim people, whips up Islamophobia and plays into the myth that the police are “tough on crime”.

“The stigma and fearmongering attached to Muslim-majority terror offenders has served to validate the hard arm of policing,” said Cage.

It also criticised recent laws which “undermine the very notion of rehabilitation”.

These include the Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Act 2020 and the Counter-terrorism and Sentencing Bill, which is currently under consideration.

Cage argued that these laws “herald a punitive turn that favours keeping individuals trapped in a cycle of prison and surveillance indefinitely”.

The Terrorism Act has been a critical cornerstone of two decades

## ANTI-TERRORISM POLICE in training

of a deeply racist justice system managed by the British state.

The laws “helped give state racism a new lease of life, with the widespread criminalisation of Muslims and/or foreign nationals by counter terrorism policing”.

And Cage points to how

counter-terrorism laws have been used to justify arming the police—who are increasingly using shoot-to-kill methods against terror suspects.

The report calls on the government to repeal all counter-terror laws since 2000.

And it wants a series of public

inquiries into the long-term impact of the laws and reparative justice.

Cage is right to say counter-terrorism laws target Muslim people.

They are a racist weapon in the armoury of the state. All such legislation should be scrapped and the architects brought to justice.

# Leaders of major unions to step down amid jobs onslaught

**THE LEADERSHIPS of the three biggest trade unions in Britain are up for election—and there will be an intensified debate about class struggle and resistance.**

Elections for general secretary—the highest union position—are set to take place in the Unite, Unison and GMB unions.

Unison general secretary Dave Prentis announced last week that he plans to step down at the end of this year.

He’s been at the head of Unison since 2001, and has overseen some major defeats for the union’s public sector worker members.

In 2011 he refused to call more action after a watershed

national public sector strike—the largest in British history—that could have turned the tide against the Tories and austerity.

He also oversaw expulsions of left wing union activists.

And Unison officials were found to have improperly “interfered” to help him win his last election in 2015.

Unite general secretary Len McCluskey is also going.

McCluskey is known for his militant rhetoric and his support for Jeremy Corbyn.

But Unite’s influence in the Labour Party was key in ensuring the party kept backing Trident nuclear weapons and pushing Corbyn to make concessions to the right. McCluskey has also

failed to lead a fight to save his members’ jobs in car and steel manufacturing.

And he oversaw a major defeat for hundreds of workers at the Grangemouth petrochemical plant in Scotland, accepting cuts allegedly to save jobs rather than organise a strike.

In each union there will be machinations and arguments over who the left should back to become the new general secretaries.

In some cases, there are as yet no clear good choices to vote for.

In Unite the choice on the mainstream left is between Howard Beckett—seen as McCluskey’s chosen successor—

and Steve Turner, who wants to cooperate with British bosses, backed up with nationalist rhetoric.

Who leads each union matters.

But across the trade union movement, the vast majority of general secretary thinks the best way to save jobs in the coming economic crisis is to cooperate with bosses.

That will often mean accepting cuts.

The most important thing is ensuring there is a fight against the coming onslaught.

That means organising to fight in every workplace—and will mean pushing from below.

**Nick Clark**

Dave Prentis



## CENTRICA

# Reject the blackmail on jobs and pay cuts

**CENTRICA, THE owner of British Gas, will tell thousands of workers to accept new conditions, including no extra overtime pay, or risk losing their jobs.**

The firm said if its employees don't sign the contract, there will be a fresh wave of layoffs. Centrica has already outlined 5,000 job cuts.

The proposals are all subject to a consultation period with unions, the company said.

Workers are furious that this is being done during a pandemic and lockdown.

## Excuse

"They are using this as an excuse because they know we can't even have discussions and meetings," a British Gas engineer who has worked for the firm for more than 15 years told the BBC.

"This really is a divide and conquer moment."

Centrica proposes to fix overtime pay at the same rate as regular hours.

Previously, overtime could attract double the hourly rate, depending on a worker's contract.

Engineers who might previously have been asked to work shifts between 8am and 8pm in the busier winter



BRITISH GAS engineers struck in 2005

PICTURE: DUNCAN BROWN

period could be allocated hours any time between 6am and 11pm.

"What is really painful is that when this coronavirus kicked off, we all rose to the challenge," said the engineer.

He and other British Gas workers volunteered to deliver meals for vulnerable people for the Trussell Trust.

This gave him and his colleagues a sense of purpose, he said, together with continuing to repair broken heating systems during lockdown.

"We were going into houses. We were feeling proud as we were key workers," he said. "It's a huge slap in the face."

Christina McAnea of the Unison union branded the bosses' move "disgraceful behaviour".

"Employees have worked hard throughout the past few months to ensure customers are well-served, despite the pandemic," she said.

"This is no way for company directors to repay

them." Unions must reject this blackmail and fight.

Other employers, such as British Airways, are also using the threat of job losses to worsen contracts.

Unions at Ryanair agreed to pay cuts in exchange for "assurances" over jobs.

And contracts are under attack at Tower Hamlets Labour-run council (see page 3). "Fire and rehire" plans could sweep away the employment terms of thousands of workers.

## PENSIONS

## Tories' unlawful pension move leads to new payouts

**THE GOVERNMENT has been forced to publish new measures to correct its failed changes to public sector pensions.**

Attacks on the pensions of millions of workers that were ruled unlawful will cost £17 billion to remedy, ministers said last week.

Changes made in 2015 to retirement benefits for workers, including doctors and teachers, were designed to shift millions of staff into less generous retirement arrangements, including higher pension ages.

But in 2018 the Court of Appeal ruled the reforms were discriminatory on age grounds.

This was because they allowed those within ten years of pension age to remain in the mostly more generous legacy retirement schemes.

Now the government has published its proposals

for removing the unlawful discrimination identified by the court, which it estimated would affect about three million people and cost up to £17 billion to fix.

On average those who benefit will gain around £6,000 over time.

The remedy to fix the scheme applies only to those who joined a relevant scheme before April 2012.

And the government is now looking to recoup funds by launching new attacks.

As part of the consultation, the government unveiled plans to transfer a further two million public sector workers' career-average schemes from April 2022.

For many workers this will mean a worsening compared to the present scheme.

Unions must fight to ensure that nobody's pension is cut after the rejection of an unlawful assault.

## STAND UP TO RACISM

## Thomas Picton must fall

**AROUND 100 people gathered in Carmarthen in west Wales last Saturday to demand the toppling of the town's Picton monument.**

Thomas Picton was a slave owner and the brutal governor of Trinidad from 1797 to 1803. He was infamous as a child torturer.

Stand Up To Racism Wales is calling for the replacement of the monument with a fitting memorial to the

victims of Picton and slavery.

Meanwhile protesters gathered in north London to protest after a police officer knelt on the neck of Marcus Coutain, a black man.

Footage posted on social media showed two officers holding a handcuffed man on the pavement.

The officer has now been suspended.

For more reports go to [facebook.com/StandUTR](https://facebook.com/StandUTR)

## OBITUARY

## Allan Matusevics 1960-2020

**I WRITE with sadness to pass on the news of Allan's sudden passing.**

Born in Sutton where he lived throughout his life, Allan was proud of his Irish-Latvian heritage.

He was a member of South London Socialist Workers Party branch and a committed trade unionist.

He worked at Wallington sorting office where he took his role as CWU trade union rep very seriously.

Allan's wife Chrissi remembers him supporting the least popular worker at the sorting office to keep his job despite not liking him.

He left the Labour Party over the abolition of the pro-nationalisation Clause 4.

He expressed his opposition to Tony Blair by punching the future New Labour prime minister at a CWU event.

After being retired from



Allan Matusevics

the post office on medical grounds in 2012, Allan took on a succession of temporary jobs, joining the relevant union for each one.

He eventually found permanent work in 2017.

Allan leaves behind wife Chrissi and son Dylan, who have been overwhelmed by messages of condolence left on Allan's Facebook page.

Allan's kind spirit, socialism and passion for social justice will be missed.

Rest in power, comrade.  
Ellen Clifford

## RESTAURANTS

## Pukkapayout at restaurants

**FORMER WORKERS at celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's Italian chain of restaurants have secured a payout.**

They have been awarded eight weeks of lost wages after an employment tribunal ruled that the company failed to consult over their redundancies.

The restaurant group collapsed last year.

The 70 Unite union members formerly employed in Jamie's Italian restaurants in Glasgow and Edinburgh will receive an average payout of £2,000 each.

Bryan Simpson, Unite organiser for hospitality, said, "The way staff were treated was despicable. They received a 30-minute call to tell them that they had all lost their jobs."

"Let this judgement act as a warning to all those multinational chains currently pressing ahead with mass redundancies without genuine and meaningful consultation."

## HOSPITALITY

## Action call in hospitality

**HOSPITALITY workers in the Unite union held a socially-distanced "Save our Jobs" protest on Tuesday of this week.**

They gathered outside the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in central London.

Workers' demands include an extension of the job retention scheme and an increase in the minimum wage to £10 an hour with no age restrictions.

Dave Turnbull, Unite national officer for hospitality, said, "Workers in restaurants, pubs, bars and hotels have faced months of uncertainty because of the pandemic."

"Now if their pay and terms and conditions aren't being slashed, mass redundancies are threatening to throw tens of thousands of them onto the scrap heap."

## STEEL

## Fight for Port Talbot jobs

**STEEL FIRM Tata is reported to be preparing mass redundancies at its Port Talbot plant in South Wales.**

The company was expected to announce that it will shut two blast furnaces and replace them with electric arc furnaces.

This could lead to thousands of job losses.

The Community union said, "If this report is accurate then this plan has been developed without any consultation with the workforce, which is an absolute disgrace."

"We are seeking urgent clarification from Tata—but rest assured, the unions will not accept the end of blast furnace steel production at Port Talbot."

"Steel production accounts for half the jobs at Port Talbot and this plan would devastate the town. "If necessary we will be prepared to fight to protect

our members' livelihoods and the future of our industry."

A major fightback is certainly needed now.

For years a succession of companies have butchered steel jobs and workers' conditions in the pursuit of profit.

And too often the union leaders have relied on cooperation with bosses and the government rather than resistance.

As recently as 24 June the GMB union welcomed government measures to aid the steel industry.

It said, "Ministers have intervened in a way not seen during modern times to help keep the economy moving throughout this crisis."

Every job must be defended.

But the unions should also demand a nationalised and democratically-run steel industry that can be ecologically sustainable.



# Russia report says oligarchs matter

by SIMON BASKETTER

## THE RUSSIANS are coming.

A report on alleged Russian interference in British politics was finally published on Tuesday this week.

Much of the media coverage focused on the government's failure to investigate alleged Russian interference in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum and the 2016 Brexit vote.

But the report, carried out by parliament's intelligence and security committee (ISC), highlighted links with the Russian rich.

Even his very establishment body said, "Russian influence in the UK is the new normal."

"Successive governments have welcomed the oligarchs and their money with open arms, providing them with a means of recycling illicit finance through the London 'laundromat', and connections at the highest levels with access to UK companies and political figures."

To distract attention, Dominic Raab, the foreign

## BORIS JOHNSON could be embarrassed by the investigation

secretary, conveniently also announced that the government had concluded that a leak of sensitive documents was part of a Russian interference operation.

Intelligence officials launched a probe after the documents were read out

in the run-up to Johnson's election victory by the then Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

Corbyn said the documents revealed the NHS would be "up for sale" by a Tory government in future trade negotiations with the US.

The ISC's move to publish the Russia report follows a row over the appointment of MP Julian Lewis as its new chair.

Lewis won the position over Downing Street's preferred candidate, the former transport secretary Chris Grayling. Lewis was then

kicked out of the Tory party "for working with Labour and other opposition MPs for his own advantage".

The Tories have worked closely with Russian money to open up the fancier bits of London as tax free bolt holes for passing oligarchs.

This fuelled a lucrative line in political donations and kept Chelsea estate agents in business.

British spooks have tended to take a more hostile attitude to Russian interference than Tory politicians.

This is partially because a Russian threat still justifies their existence, and partially because for the Tories being open for business means they will take bribes off anyone.

Some journalists rather easily take what British "security sources" tell them.

So there is tendency to exaggerate the effectiveness of Russian money and social media disruption.

People didn't vote to leave the European Union because of the Kremlin.

The Tories took Russian money when they were for Remain as well as when they were for Brexit. But for all the spin Johnson didn't want to see the report published.

We should hope it will cause him more problems.

**More online**  
For more on the Tories, go to [socialistworker.co.uk](http://socialistworker.co.uk)

## LABOUR

## Lisa Nandy draws line under Corbyn and attacks Tories from the right

THE LABOUR Party is desperate to prove it can be right wing over accusations of Russian interference and the West's trade war with China.

Its leadership wants to pitch the party as more patriotic, and a better defender of the "national interest" than the Tories.

Labour's shadow foreign secretary Lisa Nandy used television interviews on Sunday to attack the Tories from the right on almost every issue.

On Shamima Begum—the teenager who was groomed to travel to Syria to join Isis—Nandy said the Tories

should have done a better job of stopping her coming home.

She said Begum's return was "a real problem" and "the blame for that lies squarely at the Conservative government's door."

Responding to right wing scaremongering that China could spy on British people via the Huawei phone network, Nandy said, "We've got to be in a position first and foremost to safeguard our national security."

"We shouldn't be handing over large chunks of our key infrastructure."

And on claims of

Russian interference in British elections Nandy accused the Tories of being "desperately slow to wake up to the threat".

She also took the opportunity to attack former left wing Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn for not joining in with nationalistic threats against Russia in 2018.

Nandy was less keen to criticise the Tories over their dangerous handling of coronavirus.

As measures to ease the lockdown threaten a second wave of infections, Nandy said Boris Johnson was "right to aspire to open up the economy."

Labour's leadership is desperate to show it has nothing to do with the left wing politics that made Corbyn initially popular.

It's convinced that working class people are right wing and nationalistic.

And it wants to show bosses Labour can be relied on to manage the British state better than the Tories.

That means ramping up right wing rhetoric as part of capitalist competition with Russia and China—while letting the Tories off the hook over coronavirus deaths in Britain.

**Nick Clark**

Lisa nandy wants to distance the Labour leadership from Corbyn